

A
SERMON

Preach'd at EXON, May 7. 1718.

BEFORE AN
ASSEMBLY
OF THE
United Ministers
OF
DEVON and CORNWALL.

By JASPER HOW. *K*

EXON:

Printed by ANDREW BRICE, at the Head
of the *Serge-Market*, in *Southgate-street*. 1718.

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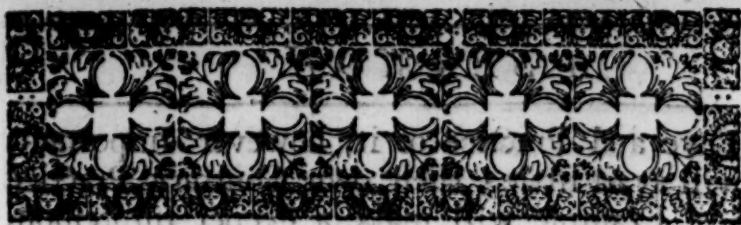
United Ministers

of
Devon and Cornwall

By JACOB HORN.

LONDON:

Printed by Andrew Harte, at the
of the King's Arms, in St. Dunstons Church.



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S E R M O N

Preach'd at *Exon*, &c.



I TIM. iv. 12.

---Be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.



THE Progress of Religion doth so much depend on the Piety and Goodness of such whose peculiar Office it is to propagate it, that there can be little Reason to hope it will ever spread much, if their Lives do not answer their Doctrines, and they are not what they teach others. The Considerations offer'd by them, to engage Men to the

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Love

Love and Practice of it, however Important, will avail little; their own Contrary Practice and Example will make a deeper Impression, and have a more lasting Influence. This is a Truth confirm'd by the Experience of all Times, Religion having ever thriven more or less, as those who have *serv'd at the Altar* have been more or less Pious. Wherefore our Blessed LORD, when He was about to institute a Standing Ministry for his Church, made choice of some to attend upon him, that he might not only inform their Understandings, and direct and guide their Faith, but also model their Lives after his own good Example, and by his most wise and excellent Instructions. And as it seems to have been his great Design and Care in it, to invest such into this Office as might best answer the Ends of it, so was it very much the Concern and Care of those appointed by him immediately thereunto. Many are the Admonitions and Counsels they give us relating to this Affair, particularly St. Paul, in his Two Epistles to Timothy, in which he strictly charges him, as he would answer it to GOD another Day, to be very Faithful in the Execution of the Sacred Trust committed to him, and to take all due Care in appointing others to it: For, as this would tend much to the Confusion and Extirpation of Error, and the Spreading of true Christianity amongst Men, so would it be the best Means of securing the Ministry from Contempt. As for his own part, the Apostle tells him, he had a special Reason for his being Exemplary in his Faith and Life, because of his Youth, on which Account some might be apt to despise him;

him; but this Prejudice he would most happily prevent by living up in all Points to the Sacredness and Dignity of his Character: *Let no Man despise thy Youth; but be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity: i. e. In case thou art such an Example to them, no Man will see Cause to despise thee.*

WHAT I intend on these Words of St. Paul is, to consider

I. THE Things in which he advises *Timothy* to be an *Example*; which Advice concerns all others in the same Office.

II. THE great Expediency of it, or the Reasonableness and Advantages of an Exemplary Conversation, in such as minister in Holy Things.

I shall consider

I. THE Things in which St. Paul advises *Timothy* to be an Example, and which Advice concerns all others in the same Office. *In Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity:* The exact Sense of all which Words cannot be defined certainly; they are capable of a different Construction, and are differently expounded, but, however understood by us, will afford us very proper Matter for our present Consideration.

In Word; i. e. say some, the Word of Doctrine as to which the Apostle is thought to admonish him, to take care, that it be according to *Godliness*. He had informed him, in the Beginning of this Chapter, that, *in the latter Times, some*
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would depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils: And it is suggested of others, that they would be in no small Danger of the like Defection and Apostacy. For which Reason it concern'd him to look well to himself, and to guard against it by good and wholesome Doctrine. This was necessary, partly on his own Account, because his own Good and Happiness was concern'd in it, and partly on the Account of others, who were, or might be, committed to his Care, and who, if he were not himself sound in the Faith, would be in danger of being misled by him, and possibly to the Hazard of their Salvation: For if the Guides and Pastors of CHRIST's Flock shall imbibe wrong Notions of Religion, if their own Thoughts of GOD, and CHRIST, and a Future State, are false and dangerous, it cannot be supposed that they can, or will, convey better or safer into the Understandings of their People; but rather that they'll lead them wide of the Truth, to the exposing their Souls to Danger. *If the Blind lead the Blind, both will fall into the Ditch.* This is like to be the Consequence. Persons may conceal their true Sentiments, but this will be no longer than their Interest shall oblige them: Upon the first Opportunity, wherein they may do it, as they think, without Injury to their Character, they'll lay hold on it, and of propagating their Errors. This they'll esteem their Duty, and a great Piece of Charity to the Souls of Men; especially in Matters which they shall apprehend to be of Importance. So that instead of being Leaders to others in the Faith, they are like to mislead them. But if, on the contrary, their own Faith be sound and
good

good, 'tis to be hop'd, it will have a good Effect in directing and settling the Faith of others, who being often put in mind of the Doctrines of Truth, and made to see the Grounds on which these stand, can hardly miss having right Notions of Things, and of being confirm'd and establish'd in them. The Truths of Religion being propos'd in their true Light, and enforc'd on their Consciences by their proper Arguments, will be apt to sink deep, and make them firm against the unhappy Delusions of Error and Apostacy.

BUT this Sense of the Word is not wholly approv'd of by some, who seem rather of the Opinion, that St. Paul advises Timothy to a becoming Seriousness and Gravity in his Words; or to observe such a Decorum in them as was suited to his exalted Station and Character; not to be vain and frothy, ludicrous and profane, as Persons who have no Savour of Religion, nor Sense of another Life: Advice much to the same purpose with that to the *Ephesians*, *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but Eph. 4. that which is good, to the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearer; and that to the Colossians, Let your Speech be always with Grace, Col. 4. 6. meek and courteous, (as saith Theodoret) season'd with Salt, wise and serious, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every Man; courteous and not fullen, wise and not wanton, grave and not light and frolicksome, such as may tend to profit and make Men better, and not to the Corruption of their Manners, and the alienating their Hearts from GOD. As we may not on the one hand, by an unseasonable Gayety of Humour, tempt others to think meanly of us,*
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or of Religion, so neither, on the other hand, by an unnecessary Severity, to dread us, and to condemn and hate Religion as the Cause. There is an happy Mean of Conversation, which borders on neither of these Extreame, and which is both agreeable and useful; and as they are peculiarly happy who can hit upon it, so it is a great Ornament both to the Man and the Christian. To be always gay and pleasant may denote us vain, and to be never so will, it may be, bring upon us the Imputation of Sourness; and either Extream be a Discredit to our Persons and Function. But yet a sinful Levity is what we ought to guard against with special Care: A sour morose Spirit may create a Dread of us; but a vain airy Temper, that knows no Difference between Times and Things, will certainly and infallibly run both Us and our Office into Contempt.

In Conversation. By this, some think, St. Paul intends the general Deportment of the Life, and that he admonishes *Timothy* to a due Regularity in his Actions. But whether he intends this or not, there can be no Question made of its Reasonableness, or our Obligations to it; since it is highly necessary that our Behaviour be of a-piece with our Sermons, and that we live as we talk: For if our Words and Actions disagree, and we are the Reverse of what we teach, the Effect of our Sermons is not like to be great, nor are we long to escape the Censures of such as shall observe our Hypocrisy and Wickedness. Such as are appointed to guide others must do it by their Actions as well as Words, and by the close and diligent Practice of what they teach: For if they do not, they, in a manner, disapprove of and condemn their own Counsels, if not describe
Religion

Religion and the *Ministry* as a mere Politick Device, contrived to carry on some mean Worldly Ends; nor will all our Arguments to the contrary have Force enough in them to prevent so base a Suggestion, as long as we do not think fit to put in Force, and to live up to, those Doctrines we commend to the Faith and Practice of others.

I M U S T observe, that this Word *Conversation* is suppos'd by some to signify only *an humble civil Behaviour*, which is very becoming a Minister of the Gospel, and of great Advantage to him in the Business of his Office. A proud haughty Spirit is contemptible in any Man, but much more so in one oblig'd by his Office to be a Pattern of Humility. 'Tis true, such may not betray that Trust, nor suffer that Authority GOD has given them to be trampled upon, in Compliance with the unreasonable Humours of Men; however, a modest obliging Carriage, and all innocent Condescensions for their Good, are very commendable. GOD has given his Pastors no Authority to *Lord it over his Heritage*, nor will their Office bear them out in it; and however natural this may be to some turbulent ambitious Spirits, 'tis very contrary to that Humility and Meekness, to that Patience and Goodness, so often inculcated in the Gospel. Indeed, were some Men to be credited in their Accounts of their Office, *outward State*, and *proud imperious Rule*, would seem to be the grand Design of it. Such talk in high Terms of it, but in a manner that favours too much of Pride and Arrogance. They are, according to their lofty Dialect, no less than *Spiritual Princes*, are full of their Thrones and Powers, and affect an Independency in them; and not only to have the Blessings of this Life,

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but of the next attach'd unto their Persons, making both to depend on their imperious and authoritative Decisions. But whilst their Notions of themselves and their Office run so very high, they can think and talk meanly and contemptibly enough of their People, whom, in their great Wisdom they sometimes stile their *Spiritual Subjects*, on some Occasions degrading them very infamously into mere Asses *ad portandum Clericorum Onera*. This they say and do, as they pretend, out of their abundant Zeal for their Office, but, as is obvious, from a Spirit of Pride, and a vain Affectation of such State and Power as does not become them. We pretend to no such Powers; and we cannot but disdain all such vile Sentiments of the Persons committed to our Care. We esteem them both our Fellow-Creatures and Christians, and some of them, in many respects, much our Superiors: And we expect no other Submissions from them than GOD has allow'd us, are for his Glory, and their Good and Happiness. If we are *over* them, it is only *in the Lord*; and what Powers we claim are for their sake: And as, in the Exercise of these, we are the *Ambassadors and Ministers of Christ*, so are we their *Servants for Christ's sake*. Men quite mistake the Design of the Ministerial Office, if they think it instituted for the Honour and Advantage of such as exercise it, and to raise them above the common Rank and Level; much more if they imagine it intended to give them a Tyrannical Power over the Persons and Consciences of others; and we shall act as much besides the true and good Design of it, if we shall assume any such Rights. And whatever Success we may be suppos'd to meet with in so doing, or as to the Rights and Powers we pretend to, an assuming Air,

Air, an exorbitant Lordly Power will never serve the Cause of true Religion; but as it has ever been, so will it always be, of pernicious Influence, and in its Consequences even subversive of the Design of it.

In Charity. This may respect either GOD or Man. As it respects GOD, it imports the true Love of him: And if the Apostle is to be understood of this, we are here taught the Importance of the Love of GOD in the Discharge of the Pastoral Office, of what Use it is to animate us herein, and that it is not to be manag'd well without it. Nor can there be any Doubt of this with such as shall consider with what Spirit and Vigour, Diligence and Constancy, the Work of it ought to be prosecuted; and how impossible it is to do this if the Heart be not inflam'd with this holy Passion. If the Heart be cold, the Action must be languid; but if that be warm'd with the Love of GOD, 'twill put Life into the whole of our Ministry, and cause us to proceed with a holy Vivacity and Vigour in the Discharge of the several Duties of it: We shall Pray, and Preach, Administer the Sacraments, and do every Thing pertaining to our Office, with a lively zealous Spirit, and much to the Advantage of our Charge, who will feel very sensibly the Heat and Influence of it, if not be wrought by Degrees into the same happy Temper; provided GOD gives the Blessing, and makes the most likely and promising Means effectual. But if we understand this Word, *Charity*, as respecting Man, (which seems to be the true Import of it in this Place) it implies the *sincere Love* of him, and Concern for his Welfare; or a holy fervent Zeal in promoting his Salvation. 'Twas the peculiar Character and Com-

mendation of our LORD, that *he went about doing Good*: This was the great Design and Business of his Life. Now, as in this every Man whatever ought to imitate him, (and no Man can be too well like him) so must it be peculiarly the Care and Study of such as have the Honour to represent and serve him in the Ministry, the very Design of this Institution being to *do good* to the Souls and Bodies of Men, and, as far as it is in the Power of such as are employ'd in it, to help on the Happiness of both, to open the Eyes of such as are spiritually blind, to subdue and conquer their inveterate Prejudices and Lusts, to make them sensible of the Importance of Religion, and the Necessity of a sincere Obedience to the Law of GOD. To this end our LORD came down from Heaven, and to this end hath he appointed a Standing Ministry in his Church: Wherefore such as are called forth to serve in it act neither conformably to the Example of their LORD, nor to the Obligation and Design of their Office, who do not make this their great Care. There can be no Question, but that, as far as their Capacities and Circumstances will admit of it, they ought to *do good* also to the Bodies of Men, and to be assisting to them in their several Necessities and Wants; to counsel the Distressed, to visit the Sick, to feed the Hungry, and cloth the Naked; and that GOD, who hath lain this upon them, commanding them to *use Hospitality*, and to extend their Charity towards others, hath no less commanded and enjoined their respective Flocks to do what they can, and what is reasonable, to assist them in it: But their chief Concern lies with the Souls of Men, in aiding and assisting, in instructing and quick'ning these in the weighty Matters of Religion, and in the
Way

Way to true and eternal Salvation. And as this is the Noblest Work any Man can be employ'd in, so is it the greatest Charity that possibly can be shewn any, seeing it consults their Happiness both in Soul and Body, in Time and to Eternity.

In Spirit; i. e. In an active lively Spirit for the Honour of GOD and Good of Souls; *Fervent in Spirit, serving the LORD*. For these are Concerns not to be prosecuted with Coldness and Indifferency, but such as ought to engage every Power of the Soul, and to be manag'd with a constant Liveliness of Affection. Paul tells the Corinthians, that he would *very gladly spend himself and be spent for them*: And in this ought every Pastor and Teacher to be like him; and such as are good and pious will resemble him in it. Their Love for the Souls of Men, and earnest Desire of their Salvation, will cause them to exert themselves with more than a common Zeal, and, in the Apostle's Language, to *spend themselves* in hopes of accomplishing it. The Consideration of their inestimable Worth and Value, of that extream Hazard they are in, and that GOD hath set his Ministers to watch over them, as also of that Account which must be hereafter given to GOD by them, will rouse up and quicken their Spirits, and make them very intent on their Duty. Their Thoughts, their Passions, and Affections, will be in a constant Motion, and their chiefest Time and Care be spent in it. Such will be the Concern and Care, the Temper and Endeavour, of one truly sensible of the Nature, Design, and Consequence of his Office, and zealous in promoting the Ends of it; a Heavenly Ardor will run through and animate all the Parts of it, and manifest itself in all their Actions.

In Faith. Whether this be to be understood of Constancy in the Faith, or of Fidelity to Men in all our Interourses and Concernments with them, the Advice is highly reasonable. 'Tis not only the Duty of Persons in Holy Orders to embrace and teach sound Doctrine, but to be constant and steadfast in the Profession of it. They may not barter away the Truth, nor drop it on any Considerations. O Timothy, saith St. Paul,

1 Tim. 6. *keep that which is committed to thy Trust, avoiding*
 20. *profane and vain Babblings, and Oppositions of Science,*
 2 Tim. 1. *falsly so called. Hold fast the Form of sound Words,*
 13. *which thou hast heard of me.* Be not impos'd upon by false Wares, nor tempted, either by Hope or Fear, to part with so sacred a Trust. Truth is a Treasure too valuable and precious to be given up on any Views, especially such as are base and sordid. GOD, who has committed it to our Care, expects that we do *contend earnestly*, tho' not *furiously*, for it, and that we will maintain and defend it, altho' with the Hazard of every thing that is dear unto us in Life, or of Life itself. But, in saying this, I do not intend (nor would I be so understood) that we are bound to adhere so pertinaciously to any Opinions in Religion, as to decline all Examination of them, or as to stick to them against plain and full Evidence and Conviction of their Falshood. 'Tis a commendable Piece of Curiosity, and to act like Reasonable Creatures, to search into the Grounds of our particular Opinions, and to be as ready to part with Error as we are to embrace Truth; but when we have once, on mature Considerations, and such Arguments as to us appear firm and strong, settled our Sentiments in Matters of Religion, we shall do well to be tenacious of them, and not to change them, as we do our Garments, with the Fashion,

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one Day believing one thing, and the next the contrary, as we shall judge it for our Interest, or as particular Notions may chance to rise or fall, or to be more or less respected in the World. There are some Men that seem to have a Set of Notions for all Times and Occasions, who are perfect Brokers in Religion, and buy and sell the Truth. A good Post, a larger Income, the Favour of some Great Man, the Interest of a Party, with many other Things, shall give a turn to them, and convert Truth and Error into each other. That which was false, whilst in Disgrace, becomes true on gaining Credit, and taking on it the Fashion; of which let it be again stripp'd, and forthwith it contracts its wonted Form, and becomes as false and groundless as ever. With such Persons the Cause of Truth is manifestly of little Value; Interest weighs more, sticks closer, and hath the strongest Holdfast in them. Now, such selfish and fickle Tempers are a great Dishonour to their Profession & Function; and as they are instable themselves, so they do much towards the unsettling others in Religion, & too often fill their Minds with incurable Prejudices against it. Such are wandering Stars, uncertain Guides, who, by their frequent Windings and Turnings, make others uncertain what to believe and do, if not in the End careless of doing what they ought. And of such may it be justly affirm'd, that they are faithful neither to GOD nor Man; but as by this variable and giddy Temper they betray the Cause of the one, so they do too much to hinder the Salvation of the other; and by Consequence, as long as they remain of this Spirit, and have their Faith so entirely under their Command, as to be able change it at their Pleasure, they little consult the true End of their Office, how much soe-

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ver they may their own private Interest; and they would certainly act much more honourably, and much better serve the Cause of true Christianity, would they learn more Constancy, and not, as they are wont to do, tack about with every Wind of Doctrine, as they shall think it for their Interest. Nor is it less their Duty, nor for their Honour, nor for the Honour and Interest of Religion, for them to be *faithful* in every Concernment of Man, and to manage justly every Trust reposed in them. And indeed, unless they are Trust-worthy, and manage with Fidelity all Affairs committed to them, they deserve not the Name of *Ministers*, not at least of JESUS CHRIST, H. b. 3. 2. *who was himself faithful to Him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his House.*

In Purity, or a holy Abstinence from whatsoever is sensual, tends to pollute and debase the Soul, and to indispose a Person for that high and holy Station, in which, as the Minister of GOD, he stands. This same Advice the Apostle repeats in other Words more accommodated to the Age of *Timothy*, in his 2d *Ep.* to him; in which he charges him to *fly Youthful Lusts*, whatever was gross and carnal, and Youth was more especially addicted to; or all such Things as were apt to defile his pure Mind, and unfit him for his Office. He must be a Person dead to all the mean and low Enjoyments of Sense, which incarnate the Soul; as must every other Person who comes to us in the Name of GOD, and pretends to be a Preacher of Righteousness. Such are under more peculiar Restrictions from Sensuality; besides those Obligations which lie upon them in common with the rest of Mankind, they are bound by their Office to *Purity* and *Self-denial*; the express Design of it being to subdue the immoderate

rate Passions of Men, and to wean them from the Enjoyments of Sense. Wherefore it is necessary that they keep themselves pure and unspotted from the World, and that they do at no Time plunge themselves into the Filth and Pollutions of it, whilst they so earnestly dehort and dissuade others from it. For what can be well more indecent, than to hear Persons inveighing warmly against its brutal Enjoyments and Pleasures, as for Instance, Drunkenness, Unchastity, Covetousness, with other Fleshly Lusts, whilst their own Hearts and Lives are full of them, and they allow themselves freely and licentiously in the Practice of them. What must the World think of such Preachers and their Invectives? Or how can it avoid censuring this most unhappy Conduct? And it is well if Men are not tempted by it to suspect of such Persons, that, whatever they may pretend, they have other Views than the Good of Souls; that Interest is at the Bottom of this fair Shew; that they are no more Enemies to those Lusts and Corruptions they decry than the worst of their People, and would no more inveigh against and discountenance them, did not their Livelihood depend upon it, and were they not under a Necessity so to do; a Necessity not of Duty and Conscience, but of Interest, which is much more dear and prevalent with them. Whilst they take those Liberties they deny others, this Consequence of it is not only possible, but such as every Man will be ready to draw from it. In short, if we would discharge the Duties of our Function well and acceptably, we must take care to shew our selves in all Things a Pattern of Good Works, in Doctrine Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemn'd, and in Conversation unaffected Innocency and Goodness.

II. THE Expediency of this Advice, or the Reasonableness and Advantages of an Exemplary Faith and Life, in such as *minister in Holy Things*, is what I shall proceed to consider. And

I. TIS necessary to the Credit and Honour of the Ministry, or to preserve the Persons of such as are appointed to it from Contempt. There can be none, I presume, present, that are ignorant what an Outcry there hath been in late Times against the Sacred Order, and what a Torrent of Reproach and Scandal hath been pour'd out upon it from all Quarters: And so far hath the Folly of some, and the Malice and Wickedness of others, prevail'd, that a *Priest* hath been made the common Jest. It cannot be hard for any that shall duly weigh and consider Things, to trace this up to its true Cause. It is not from any thing that is ridiculous and contemptible in the Office, nor is this often pretended. And indeed whilst Infidels, and others, who, to gratify a vicious Humour, copy after them, condemn and ridicule the *Person*, they most of them profess a high Sense of, and Veneration for the *Office*. Whether they are sincere or not in these Professions, as some of them probably are not, the Dignity and Advantages of it are too great and conspicuous to be deny'd. Some few of this profane Tribe of Sinners there may be, and I question not there are, whose Spleen is level'd against the Office it self. Such are Enemies to all Religion even from Principle, and as such they despise and hate of Course an Office instituted on purpose to promote and propagate it. Were it in their Power, their Malice would unquestionably soon subvert and ruin it, and extirpate an Order of Men consecrated to and employ'd in the important Business of it: And as this is very consonant to their Principles of Infidelity, so is it not impertinent to their Desire and Design, to cast all the
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the Dirt and Calumny they can upon them, this being, as they are not insensible, one likely Method to further it, and to lay this Sacred Office, and Religion with it, waste and in the Dust. 'Tis possible such had been Enemies to the Ministry, whatever the Persons devoted to it had been as to their Lives, tho' there is too much Cause of Suspicion that the Indiscretion of some, and Wickedness of others, have contributed not a little to their pestilent Errors. However, should it be granted that these arise wholly from another Cause, it will hardly be deny'd by impartial Judges, that the Hatred so commonly conceiv'd at the Preachers of the Gospel, and the Contempt and Odium so generally cast upon them, is too much owing to the Irregularities and Corruptions of some of that Venerable Body. Such have not only expos'd their own Persons to Derision, the natural Consequence of it, but have unhappily occasion'd the Contempt and Hatred of the whole Order; for whilst some have been so stupid and foolish as that they cannot, and others so malicious and wicked as that they will not, distinguish between the Good and Bad, it has so happened that the whole Body hath fallen into Disgrace, and the *Office itself* been expos'd and ridicul'd. Nor have the People been only tempted by it to speak contemptibly of the one, and to slight and censure the other, but many of them to decry and neglect *Religion* itself: For this hath been the unhappy Effect of it; their Impiety and Wickedness hath caused the Sacrifices of GOD to be abhorr'd, his Service to be neglected, and Religion to sink in the Nostrils of many. Some who have observ'd this ill Effect of it have hop'd and endeavour'd to remove it, by putting the Words of their LORD into the Mouths of the Common People, and by teaching them *to do as they say*, and not *as they do*. But if they cannot hereby hinder them-

selves from falling into Contempt, and Religion from being hated, they promise themselves this one Advantage at least from it, to dispose their People to Patience under them, and to confirm them in their own Party and Interest. Nor perhaps have they been wholly out in this their Aim; but little, I believe, has been done by it towards the lessening the Contempt of their Persons, or the preventing others from following their Example. The People have gone on to invert the Saying of our LORD, *doing not as they say, but as they do*. And this Effect is ever to be expected from it; for as long as their Guides and Teachers shall be vicious, they'll imitate their Practice and despise their Persons: nor will any thing be able to rescue them or their Office from that Load of Reproach and Infamy which lies upon them, until they shall put in Practice their own Rules. This probably would raise the Honour of both, and cause 'em once more to shine in the Eyes of Men; but no other Means without it are like to be effectual. Men may, if they please, talk of their Office in pompous Expressions, and fetch their Images of it from the highest Dignities of *this World*; they may rob the State of its Titles to do Honour to the *Mitre*; but this will be of little other Service than to create Suspicions in the Minds of others that they affect a State and Power which no way belongs to 'em, and would be in *Fact*, what they pretend to be only in *Metaphor*, *real and absolute Princes*. And possibly they will think they have Reason for these Suspicions, when they shall see them in this manner magnify their Office, not by their good Lives, but great Titles, not by sublime Actions but high Expressions of it; for as this will seem to them to intimate a greater Value for *Temporal Power & Grandeur* than for *Virtue & Holiness*, so will it be easily concluded from it, that their Hearts are principally

pally set on these, and that it is not for want of Affection they are not actually possess'd of them. Wherefore, I must needs think, it would be more for the Honour of their Office, would some Men talk of it in more modest Language; and that a *devout* and *pious Behaviour* would much more contribute to the *true Ends* of it than any *affected Strains* whatever, which, tho' they may answer their Design on some few weak Minds, will be despised by others, who will expect *better Arguments* of its Excellency than *high swoln Words of Vanity*, such as may demonstrate it to their *Senses*, and cause them to *see* and *feel* the Worth and Weight of it. When it shall be so happy as to be attended with a suitable Conversation, it will recommend itself to the *Reason* and *Consciences* of all, nor will the greatest *Prejudice* & *Malice* be able to alledge any Thing of Moment against it. *Infidels* will be ashamed of their rude & abusive Assaults upon it, and aw'd into a deep Silence, if not a profound Veneration for it. Wherefore, would such as think to advance it by *glorious Images* taken from *this World* forbear these, and rise and shine in *substantial Acts of Piety and Goodness*, they would find it much more to their purpose, and might then even dare the worst of their Enemies to *despise* them; for as they would not be able to do it without running counter to the Reproaches of their Consciences, so neither without becoming the Contempt and Abhorrence of Mankind, who, how little soever they may *practise* true Religion and Goodness, will not be able to see it affronted in its *brightest Examples*, without a just Indignation and Horror at the Thing, and Contempt of such as shall presume thus to reproach and censure it.

2. NOR is a *good Example* only necessary to the Reputation of the Ministry, but of great Consequence in promoting the *true Ends* of it. Nor can

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we reasonably promise ourselves much Success herein without it. It ever hath been expected, and ever will be, of such as *minister in Holy Things*, that their Conversations be suitable, and that they lead in the Way of Life as well as teach it; otherwise their Discourses will be of little Weight or Efficacy. Let them talk ever so well or handsomely on the great Points of Religion and a good Life; few will be found to mind them; their Arguments for the Truth and Reasonableness of Christianity will be disregarded, their Dissuasives from Sin and Motives to Holiness be despis'd, and Death and Judgment, Heaven & Hell, be look'd upon as Words of Course out of their Mouths, which their Office, or, what some are pleas'd to call, *their Trade*, does oblige them to, without any real Design or Meaning in them. And if they shall live as if they believed nothing in Religion, others will be but too apt to take up this Opinion of it, or at least to look upon it as not very necessary; and what do they less than disapprove of it whilst in their *Lives* they contradict their *Sermons*? Do they not in Effect tell their People, that *there is nothing in Religion*; that *there is no G O D*, *no Providence*, *no Life to come*? that *these are only profitable Tales*, *devis'd on purpose to promote a Secular Interest*? and that *the Authors and Publishers of them know so much*, and for that Reason pay no more Respect unto them? This is an Interpretation that hath been too often put upon the Wickedness and Irreligion of Persons in *Holy Orders*, and which such as are atheistically inclin'd are too apt and ready to put upon it. This Interpretation, or Consequence which they draw from it, is, as we all know, most unjust and impious, and not at all according that Nicety in reasoning these Persons sometimes pretend to; but this is *Free Thought*, and what they take to be for their purpose,

pose, to justify them in their *Infidelity*. Upon which account they are glad of this Handle given them, that they may make a pretence of it, to countenance their *Impiety*. Nor are they curious in examining into the Reasonableness of this Consequence; they chuse rather to believe it without Enquiry, for fear lest, if they should pry too narrowly into it, they should discover its Weakness, and lose the Consolation they take in it. To prevent which they take care not to be too nice and curious, flattering themselves with the secret Hopes of its Justice and Goodness. Because some whose Station obliges them to study Religion most perfectly, who may be presum'd to know it best, and have as much Reason as any to practise it, do live in the Neglect of it, and as if it were no better than a Fable, they conclude, and as they imagin with Reason, that there can be little in it; or that it is a base Imposture, the Invention of *Knaves* to keep *Fools* in awe, and to make a Property of them. With this most vile & malicious Thought they encourage and harden themselves in Wickedness, charging (as has been too often done) their ill Principles and Lives on the Sensuality and Irreligion, as they speak in Contempt, of the *Priesthood*. But tho' it should be suppos'd and granted, that none will be so unhappy as to make this ill Use of it, 'tis still much to be fear'd that not a few may be tempted by it to believe Religion *unnecessary*, at least *not so necessary* as is commonly represented; and consequently, that they may very safely go on in their Sins, as long as they do not out-do their Guides, and are not more loose and profligate than they. This I am perswaded hath been one great Cause, if not the greatest, of the Corruption and Degeneracy of the present Times. I am far from making this Charge general. nor do I intend it of *any One Par-*

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ty, exclusive of others; but of such only in *every Party* as have lain themselves open to it. If there be any Denomination of Christians amongst us whose Ministry is more obnoxious than that of others, this Charge will, I confess, fall chiefly upon it; and I am free to own it is my Intention it should: 'Tis *their scandalous Living* principally that hath extorted this Censure; which however I should have thought my Duty to have suppress'd, were not their Faults notorious to the World, and, as I believe, a grand Cause of the Impiety and Immorality of the Age; and were it not become necessary for the Ministry of *every Persuasion*, as they value the Cause of Virtue, to bear their publick Testimony against them, that none may have Reason to think they approve of their Vices, nor may take Encouragement from their Silence to imitate them. There are, I am satisfy'd, many of sober and unblemish'd Lives in *all Parties*, and who are *burning and shining Lights* to their respective Flocks; and who will not, I hope, think themselves injured in this Reflection. And I wish there were no Cause to say that the Immoralities of some, and the Lukewarmness, or rather Indifferency, of others as to Religion, hath had a very pernicious Influence on the Morals of the People: But this is a Truth that is too plain to be deny'd, or indeed conceal'd. There is no need of raking back into Times long since past, as some have done, to know the Cause of our depraved Manners, nor yet to impute our Degeneracy to the unhappy Transactions of those Times; for, if rightly trac'd, it would be found to flow from another Fountain, and to be owing to a nearer Cause, the Impiety and Profaneness of some who *serve at the Altar*. Nor is it to be thought that we can be rescu'd from our present unhappy State, or that lost Piety and Virtue can
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revive amongst us, unless a *Reform be first made in the House of GOD*, and the *Sons of Levi* are purg'd from those bad Examples that are amongst them. Might this once be, which yet, as Things stand, can hardly be expected, it might be hop'd it would do much towards the restoring decay'd Virtue and Piety. This in Time might, by the Blessing of GOD, put a stop to that Torrent of Impiety and Profaness broken in upon us, and *cause our dry Bones yet once more to live*: For when the LORD's Portion should be thus generally unblemish'd in their Lives, as Iniquity would have no longer Countenance from any of them, so would it give a mighty Credit to their Persons, inspire their Doctrines with an uncommon Spirit and Vigour, and cause them to come home with great Force on the Hearts of their Hearers. When they shall *live like their LORD*, they will also *speak like Him, with Authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees*, or more modern Hypocrites, *who say and do not*, and who not doing as they say, their Words are cold and lifeless, and of no Effect upon the Hearer. The Truths which flow from them, tho' perhaps most Excellent, die on their Lips, and are wholly disregarded; or they are consider'd only as the mere Exercises of Wit, which, tho' for awhile much admir'd and applauded, no body minds so as to put them in Practice; whereas a good Life would give Credit and Vigour to them, render them convincing to the Understanding, and perswasive to the Conscience. This would soften, if not extirpate, the Prejudices some have suck'd in against Religion, and cause it to be taken into their serious Consideration. 'Tis true, the Arguments and Motives of it are, as to their Substance, the same, by whomsoever propounded; but there is a vast Difference as to their Energy and Effect. They

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have more of Spirit and Authority, and work much more effectually, when offer'd to our Reason and Conscience by a Good Man, than when propos'd to us by the Lewd and Vicious: For whereas the Irreligion of the latter causes them to be condemn'd and neglected, the Virtue and Piety of the former oftentimes procure them a favourable Hearing and a kind Reception. And it stands with Reason that when Persons are conscious their Teachers propose no more unto them than what they desire and endeavour themselves to observe and do, they will be the more willing to examin into what they say, and if reasonable to embrace it. And as the doing this will be a most proper Way to convey into their Hearts right Notions of Religion, and to shew them their Obligations to it, so will a good Example be a Demonstration to them of its Practicableness. They will see by this, that it enjoins nothing but what is reasonable and possible to an Honest Heart, yea what might be very easily comply'd with, had we but Spirit and Resolution enough to set about it. Religion, by reason of its Contrariety to our Natural Appetites and Lusts, seems, in the Theory, to have something in it that is very abstruse and difficult; and this tempts some, not very well affected to the Cause of it, to think it above the Capacity and Condition of Human Nature, however assisted, and to be impossible to their State and Circumstances in the present Life. But when they shall have this Practical Demonstration of the contrary, it must silence all such Natural Prejudices, and make it evident, even to their Senses, that there can be nothing in them. Besides, a good Example hath something in it that is very commanding and attractive, and that very much conciliates the Love and Affection of Men, and, as it were, by an holy

ly Violence and Compulsion obliges their Imitation. They are this way made sensible of new Beauties in Religion, and such as they could not discern before, and whilst they beheld it only in the Speculation. And as this encreases their secret Veneration for it, so it inspires them with stronger Desires still towards it. Their Hearts are ravish'd with the Sight, they feel a holy Passion kindling in them, and an Uneasiness in their present State, and until they are actually engag'd in the same virtuous Courses, and are enrich'd and adorn'd with the same divine and amiable Perfections. Nor is this only a very proper Means to excite a Sense of Religion and Virtue in the Heart, and to take Sinners off from their wicked Doings, but even necessary to work this Effect on some Tempers, who are of so gross a Composition, so debas'd into Sensuality and Lust, that they can understand and admire nothing but what comes recommended to them by their Senses. Truth and Goodness are try'd and judg'd of by these; and if these happen to be approv'd of by them, they are perswaded of their Excellency; but not otherwise. Dry Reason and Argument, however substantial, is lost upon 'em; their Minds have not been inur'd to it, nor do they well comprehend it; they must have Things made plain unto their Senses. When they see them illustrated in the Life and Manners of the Preacher, they are able to understand the Worth of them; but not 'till then. Some indeed are of so Noble and Rational a Make, that they love to consider Matters in their own Native Light, abstracted from the Sentiments of others, and, upon sufficient Conviction of their Reasonableness and Goodness, dare believe and practice them; But all are not of this exalted Spirit and Genius, Many know not how to value any thing, unless

they hear and see it approv'd of in the Opinion and Conduct of others, especially their Teachers. Provided such make Religion their Business, and give them a good Idea and Pattern of it in their Lives, they are satisfy'd of its Excellency; and what they see is an Inducement to them to do likewise. But if they shall observe them to live the Reverse of their Doctrines, they have neither Faith in nor Heart to practise them. Religion looks like an airy Dream unto them; nor can they, by any Considerations from it, be perswaded to take upon them the Possession of it, or to conform to its Directions. Consequently, if we would hope to succeed in our Arguments and Attempts upon them, we must shew them the Way, by giving them a good Example in our own Conduct. Many, in short, are the Advantages hereof; but I may not insist longer upon them; and I wish I may not have been too tedious in what has been already offer'd. But before I shall conclude this Discourse, I would beg Leave to observe, that however important and necessary a good Example may be, it is not to be expected, that in this imperfect State we should be without our *Failings*. After the highest Improvements in *Virtue*, we shall still have some Remainders of *Corruption*. We can no more live above *Infirmities* than we can above *Censure*; and it ought ever to be remember'd by such as are our People, or as may casually converse with us, that *we are Men subject to like Passions with themselves*. The Scriptures indeed have sometimes dignify'd us with the Stiles and Title of *Angels*; but we are such only by Name and Office, and not by Nature. As we are liable to the same Temptations with other Men, so to be surpris'd and overcome by them: And would some, instead of *defaming* us for those *Infirmities*, to which Human Nature in its pre-

sent State is always incident, and in many Cases are unavoidable, would they, I say, *compassionate* and *pray* for us, excuse our Infirmities, and justify our Character, as far as they honestly might, they would herein act with more Candour and Charity, and no otherwise than in Justice they are bound to do, and than we may with Reason challenge from them. But this is a Piece of Charity and Justice which is not always paid us, nor yet always to be expected. It is well if our Integrity and Honesty do not sometimes come into Condemnation. This we know, that the brightest Virtue is liable to Censure, and cannot always escape the Slander of malicious Tongues. There are some who take delight in Satire, and are never employ'd more to their Satisfaction, than when approaching and defaming the Innocent; such will make Virtue and Piety itself the Subject of their wicked Drollery, and decry and slander it, not only in spite of Modesty and Truth, but of their own Consciences. They have perhaps their secret Reasons for it, and more than every Man knows of, a conscious Sense of Guilt, which puts them upon this vile and abusive Practice, in hopes of composing their own rankled Spirits, and of giving Ease to their Minds from those sad and bitter Reproaches their Wickedness hath expos'd them to. And if Virtue cannot escape the Malice of such Tongues, 'tis not to be suppos'd that our common Failings will be excus'd; but rather that the same malicious and satyrical Wits will make bold with them. Tho' under this Evil, it will administer no little Consolation to us, if in the main we have liv'd with a pious Care, and have given no just Occasion to their Malice; if they have only our Infirmities, and such as every Man is more or less subject to, and not any Vices to carp at in us. I would hope, that all of

us present, who serve GOD in the Ministry, are engag'd with an honest pious Zeal in the Duties of our Station; and a Suggestion to the contrary from Me, who am so much a Stranger to the Persons and Conversations of this *Venerable Audience*, would be immodest and uncharitable: But forasmuch as none of us are beyond the Reach and Power of Temptations, and without our Infirmities and Dangers, it cannot be improper for us, at any Time, to be put in mind and admonish'd of our Duty; nor will it, I hope, be taken amiss at this Time, tho' from one so unfit for this Office. Happy were it for you, for me, and for all whom GOD hath, in his wise Providence, set apart to a Charge so great and awful, if we had a Sense of the Weight and Consequence of it engraven in the deepest Characters on our Hearts, and had at no Time need to be admonish'd of the Duties of it. But dare we say this? Do not our frequent Miscarriages (if I may use so hard a Word without Offence) testify the contrary? And if so, I hope, I need no other Apology for this Presumption. I have no need tell you, your own sad Experiences can, I fear, tell you much more, of the Abuses which are commonly offer'd us, and how ready some are to lay hold on every slight Occasion, and to manage and improve it to our Prejudice. We are struck at on every side, and expos'd to the Insults and Malice of every Fool; and cannot therefore be too Exact and Pious in our Conversation. We have some of us, it may be, peevish Tempers from within to deal with, which will be ready to censure every Word and Action that is not precisely accommodated to their particular Humour and Manner: And from without we are the Scorn and Hatred of a proud and envious Generation, who make a Merit of it to treat us as the haughty and malicious *Jews* did our Common Lord and Saviour,

Saviour, and who scruple at no mean and vile Arts to make us cheap, and to expose us to the Contempt and Hatred of an unthinking World. 'Tis not enough for them to have charg'd us with *Sedition* and *Schism*, to deny the *Validity* of our *Orders* and our *Sacraments*, and to consign us over to *Damnation*, as the unavoidable Consequence; but they would also insinuate of us, that *we are grown very remiss as to Religion, and come very short of the Industry of our Worthy Predecessors*. I wish this last Part of their Charge may not have too much of Truth in it; but probably it has much more of Malice. Some Men think it their Interest to say every Thing that is bad of us, and possibly they may believe themselves in what they say: But whether they always do this or not, they hope to make their Advantage of it, to alienate the Hearts of the People from us, and to secure them in, or to bring them over to, their own Parry. And we have no better Way to disappoint them in these Hopes, than by living in such a manner as to place our Characters above their malicious Censures. The Unreasonableness and Injustice of many Things said against us, and the Cause we are concern'd in, have been lain open with great Strength of Argument by some Worthy * Persons amongst our selves, to whom we have all our Obligations on this Account; but there is one Argument which we are all capable of, and we all ought to manage to the best Advantage, if we design the Service of Religion, and that is, *A good Life*. Few Persons will be at the Pains to examine into the Merits of a Cause, and such as will commonly do it under strong Prejudices, by which means the best Reasoning and Argument is but of little Force: But if to *sound Reason* we take

* PEIRCE, WITHERS, &c.

take care to add a *good Life*, the Force of it will be much greater and more effectual, and such as will probably defeat the Hopes as well as Accusations of our Adversaries. But whatever may be the Effect of it as to *others*, we may promise *ourselves* this Advantage from it, the Applauses of our Consciences, and the Approbation of our GOD. We shall have nothing to reproach our selves withal in the Matters of our Duty; and, which is still of more Consequence, GOD himself will approve of us: And as in a Day of Judgment our Integrity will be clear'd up, to the Satisfaction of all, so shall we then receive the Reward due unto it.

WHEREFORE may the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make us all perfect to do his Will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his Sight, thro' JESUS CHRIST; To whom be Glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

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